



St. Lucie County Legislative Update

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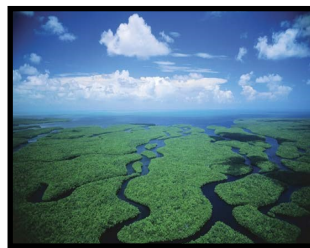
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Our Mission....

To provide service, infrastructure and leadership necessary to advance a safe and sustainable community, maintain a high quality of life, and protect the natural environment for all our citizens.

WATER POLICY LEGISLATION MAKES FIRST HURDLE



The House State Affairs Committee unanimously approved PCB SAC 16-01, which continues last session's efforts to craft a comprehensive water policy for the state.

Industry groups largely supported the bill, which contained much of the language from last sessions' efforts at water reform.

In addition to the Florida Chamber of Commerce and the Associated Industries of Florida, the legislation also drew praise from Jim Spratt, the government affairs director for the Florida Nursery, Growers and Landscape Association.

The measures seek to establish water flow levels for the state's natural springs and define the Central Florida Water Initiative. The bills also include further management action plans for Lake Okeechobee, the Caloosahatchee Estuary, and the St. Lucie River and Estuary, the inland portion of the Caloosahatchee River watershed.

The proposals would also require the Office of Economic and Demographic Research to provide an annual assessment of the state's water resources and conservation lands, something that was not included in the House's plan this past spring.

SCOTT PROPOSES CHANGES TO ECONOMIC INCENTIVES

Gov. Rick Scott wants to create a massive \$250 million fund that he can use to lure companies to the Sunshine State.

Scott says the "Florida Enterprise Fund" would allow Florida to better compete against other states.

But Scott's push comes while the Florida Legislature has grown skeptical of current incentive programs. Scott's new fund would incorporate some suggestions from legislators. For instance, the proposed fund would keep incentive awards in a trust fund within the state treasury instead of continuing the current practice of keeping the funds in an escrow account.

That would allow the money to collect a higher interest rate, but it wouldn't let the Legislature pay incentive funds on a pay-as-you-go model as some legislators have suggested. Scott also wants to eliminate the use of special waivers and require a 10 percent annualize return on investment on top of the original amount invested in the company.

Finally, Scott proposes that legislative leaders have a final say over any business projects in excess of \$1 million.

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St. Lucie County!****Mark Satterlee**

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**SOLAR AMENDMENT GETS STAMP OF APPROVAL**

The future of an amendment that seeks to expand the use of solar power in the state got a little brighter Thursday, Oct. 22, when the Florida Supreme Court opined that the amendment's language meets the constitutional requirements to appear on the ballot next year.

Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi had requested that the court issue an advisory opinion on the amendment, sponsored by Floridians for Solar Choice, not to be confused with the utility-backed group Consumers for Smart Solar.

Bondi, along with a number of business organizations and utility companies, filed briefs with the court alleging that the proposed amendment failed to conform to Florida's constitutional and statutory requirements, which dictate that an amendment must contain "clear and unambiguous language" related to only "one subject."

**SENATE STARTS TO ASSEMBLE TAX CUT PACKAGE**

The Florida Senate pushed the first components of a 2016 tax cut package out of the starting gate Tuesday, Oct. 20th.

The Senate Finance and Tax Committee also signaled its tax priorities for the session, which include cutting corporate income tax rates, business rents and the back-to-school sales tax holiday, passing three bills which together would save Floridians -- and cost the government -- \$182 million next year.

Sen. Dorothy Hukill, R-Port Orange, is sponsoring a small cut in the corporate income tax rate by raising the exemption from the first \$50,000 of income to the first \$75,000 (SB 76) and cutting the sales tax on business rents from 6 percent to 5 percent (SB 116).

Her third bill (SB 198), would create a back-to-school sales tax holiday running from Aug. 5 through Aug. 14 and would continue to exempt clothing and footwear worth \$100 or less from sales tax along with books worth \$50 or less and the first \$750 of the cost of a personal computer.

An array of business groups including retailers, Realtors, and the Florida Chamber endorsed all three bills. The Florida Association of Counties endorsed the tax break for commercial rents. The Florida Alliance for Retired Americans, which claims to have 230,000 members in the state, testified in opposition to the corporate income tax and rental tax breaks, saying that Florida needs more money to adequately fund basic services.

PSC APPROVES \$34.2 MILLION NUCLEAR RECOVERY CHARGE

State utility regulators approved a request by Florida Power & Light to charge customers \$34.2 million for a pair of nuclear reactors at the energy giant's Turkey Point complex in Miami-Dade County. Critics had argued that FPL's project isn't economically feasible and won't benefit customers.

FPL requested the money, available to power companies under the state's 2006 nuclear-cost recovery law, to secure licenses and permits for the reactors.

FPL has argued that the proposal will further diversify the company's fuel sources, reduce carbon dioxide and other emissions and increase the reliability of its overall system, which serves 4.8 million customers in Florida.

The reactors, projected to eventually cost \$13.7 billion to \$20 billion, await approval of a combined operating license from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

The licenses are anticipated to be awarded in 2017, and the reactors are projected to be completed by 2027 and 2028.